

EXPERTS HERE SCOFF AT PARIS STORY OF PEARL DOCTORING

Report That Hindu in Paris Has Method of Reconstructing American Pearls Into Indian Gems Causes Consternation in Pearl Dealers Association of France

SOME of the leading American experts in precious stones regard with surprise mingled with amusement the report cabled from Paris the other day that the Pearl Dealers Association of France is tremendously wrought up because its president has decided to have legal proceedings brought against a Paris pearl broker who is said to have sold for \$15,000 a pearl that is alleged to have been doctored.

Further details of the charges read like the theme of a mystery story into which enter secrets of treating pearls by learned and none too scrupulous old Hindus, the use of ultra-violet rays to give the pearl a superb Oriental lustre and the palming off of the product on an unsuspecting customer.

According to further information Paris expects the scandal to assume tremendous proportions. And no wonder, for Chapter II. of the romance flashing under the Atlantic brings into the action of the story a so-called diamond syndicate, whose members have been dismayed because of the fantastic prices paid for pearls in the past few years. Their dismay did not prevent them from adopting the very practical step of employing detectives, however, and if the cabled reports are accurate some of the sleuths went out on the trail of a so-called pearl syndicate.

Follows then a tableau: Triumphant detectives returning to dismayed diamond syndicate with proof that many pearls represented to confiding patrons as having been bought or swiped from the head dress of some proud old Indian rajah were nothing more than common products of unostentatious mussels which had been dredged out of the Wabash or the Mississippi, then sent from New York to a suburb of Paris and there doctored by a Hindu expert who maintains a laboratory wherein he removes the native modesty of the Wabash and substitutes the lustre of Orientalism. The Hindu is quoted as saying:

"My method permits doctoring the American pearl into an Indian pearl which puzzles the best experts and which sometimes brings as high as \$90,000."

Aside from the element of romance this story has an interest quite positive for Americans who in the past decade have purchased pearls valued at an enormous sum in the aggregate. From the modest seed pearls in the ring of a little girl and the scarfpin pearl of a youth, the pearls owned and worn by men and women of the United States mount up to magnificent ropes seen at the opera, each of which may represent a fortune. When it is remembered that at least \$10,000,000 worth of pearls are sold in New York alone every year one may understand why the reports recently cabled from Paris should have commanded wide attention.

That some individual owners of pearls costing many thousands of dollars should be disturbed by the stories from Paris is not to be wondered at either. The man who has spent \$20,000 or \$30,000 for a necklace may be pardoned if he is a trifle nervous over the possibility that its pearls may have been found in mussels in the mud of some Western river. But if such a man purchased his necklace from a reputable dealer, he may calm himself. At least such is the opinion of Ludwig Nissen, president of the American Jewelers' Protective Association.

"There are, of course, frauds in every line of business," Mr. Nissen said. "Quacks are found in medicine and in the law. Others naturally are to be found among dealers in precious stones."

"A number of years ago, fifteen or possibly twenty, we heard of a good many people in this country who were being swindled by doctored diamonds; stones which were artificially changed in color. Those practicing this fraud merely dipped the stones into a chemical solution, which changed the yellow tint to the steel blue, and it was a very profitable operation while it lasted, but it didn't last long before being discovered."

"I think the fraud was first brought to light here in New York, where somebody who had purchased such a diamond happened to wash it in plain water—and all the blue tint, which made it so costly, came off. News of this was given to the press, and within a day or two I presume tens of thousands who had recently bought diamonds were industriously engaged in soaking them and scrubbing them. So widely was the fraud known and so deep was its impression on the public mind that countless people, intending to purchase diamonds, selected the stones for their appearance, but refused to take them until they had seen them washed thoroughly. Years have passed, however, since we have heard anything of this kind in regard to diamonds."

"Now pearls may be doctored in just the same way, and I have reports that in some cases electricity is being employed in the process of covering them with a solution which gives the Oriental lustre."

"Have you seen such pearls?" Mr. Nissen was asked. "Yes," he replied, "and I wish to add with emphasis that a competent expert should be able to discover such a doctored pearl the minute he looks at it. Furthermore, he usually does discover it."

"As a matter of fact, the whole thing is done so bunglingly and has so little lasting effect that a single drop of alcohol will cut off the solution and reveal the pearl in its natural state. Alcohol, moreover, does not injure a real pearl."

"The moral I wish to point out is that people who buy pearls should purchase them only from the recognized dealers who handle them, and who are experts to such an extent that they seldom can be fooled. And if they are fooled the purchaser will always have his easy redress with a house of responsibility when it has sold an article that is not what it is and the dealer through whom it passed think it is."

"The trouble with many people is that they go shopping around, and have irresponsible agents or dealers bringing in goods to be examined. Such a dealer often is able to impress a possible purchaser with a plausible story that because he is satisfied with small

profits he can sell much lower than the well known houses which carry large stocks of precious stones. It is only in purchasing pearls through some such irresponsible dealer that the purchaser runs any risk whatever."

"As to the interesting reports cabled over from Paris about doctored pearls, you may remember that a few years ago what were termed reconstructed

"That cabled story is simply ridiculous," he said. "I never knew of a single pearl bringing \$90,000 in all my life. For a single pearl \$25,000 would be quite an extraordinary price. I may add that when the alleged Hindu says his methods permit the doctoring of an American pearl into an Indian pearl that puzzles the experts it can be for only a few minutes, because a single

forward to any such discovery—there hasn't been one, by the way, for fifty years."

"The best fisheries continue to be in the Indian Ocean, with some near Australia, others on the coasts of Venezuela, Korea, and Lower California. But the Indian Ocean continues to be the principal source of supply for new pearls."

"Formerly divers used to go down in the water as far as necessary, stay long enough to select large, well developed oysters, and bring them up to the surface with care. Of course this was slow work, but it resulted in bringing up many good pearls of large size and few small ones."

New York Buys \$10,000,000 Worth of Pearls a Year—Dealer Says Bogus Gems Are Detected at a Glance—Lustre Never Permanent Where Doctoring Is Employed

that excrescence is left alone the larger it becomes. No other form of animal life, I may add, has the particular disease that results in the formation of the pearl. Well, it is easily seen that the gathering of seed pearls means the prevention of development that would otherwise result in large pearls, on the same principle that where you pick a peach blossom you

year it is evident that the new supply is not equal to the demand and that of necessity prices must continue to go up. Years ago, when the fisheries commenced to fail in producing fine pearls in sufficient quantity, the world of commerce began to look for its supply in a new quarter—to the great aggregations of pearls hoarded by Orientals. Some of those Eastern princes had huge

of pearls, but while their present owners live it will be practically impossible to purchase them and place them on the market."

Mr. Nissen was asked about reports published every few years regarding the discovery of diamond drifts in the West. "They have never amounted to anything," he replied, "although I wish to add that of the few stones found in Arkansas some have been of very good quality. But the supply of the Western diamonds thus far found is so small as to be almost negligible."

"Considerable amusement was caused among dealers, by the way, during the recent tariff discussion, when one enthusiastic Congressman declared that there should be a duty of 35 or 40 per cent. on diamonds the State of Arkansas in two or three years would be supplying the diamonds of the world. Evidently Congress didn't believe the gentleman," Mr. Nissen concluded. "And as a matter of fact, I am decidedly of the belief that Arkansas hasn't enough diamonds to make it pay to mine them."

Free Taxicab Rides.

IT will probably be news to the people of New York to learn that under certain conditions it is possible to ride to their hearts content in a taxicab without having to pay one cent for the privilege," remarked a man familiar with the situation. "Of course a certain amount of inconvenience will be experienced in obtaining the free rides, and probably some trouble and unpleasantness will be encountered, particularly from bellicose chauffeurs, but nevertheless it is possible to ride free."

"A section of the new public hack ordinance now in use, which gives the proper city authorities control of all public hacks in operation on the streets, says: 'This ordinance shall not apply to or govern any vehicle hired or obtained from a livery stable or garage and which does not solicit patronage upon the streets.' In other words, the city does not have authority or supervision over taxicabs that are operated from a garage."

"These taxicabs and their chauffeurs are licensed by the State and not the city, and their owners are privileged to charge any amount they please for taking patrons a certain distance. They are privileged to charge 50 cents a mile or \$1 a mile provided the patron is willing to pay the rate demanded. Not being licensed by the city the owners are not compelled to place meters on the cabs and there is no uniform rate of fare."

"The method of operating taxicabs from garages and thus escaping the necessity of complying with the provisions of the taxicab ordinance is carried out like this: A man emerging from a restaurant, say, and desiring to hire a taxicab and not seeing one on the spot informs the starter that a taxicab is needed. The starter phones to the garage of the firm he represents and a taxicab is immediately sent over to the restaurant. The customer strikes a deal with the chauffeur and is driven away. In this case there is no violation of the taxicab ordinance, for the taxicab was not seeking patronage upon the public streets but was ordered from the garage. Under these conditions there is absolutely no chance to ride free and the customer must pay the fare agreed upon."

"But here is where the opportunity is presented to ride free in this style of taxicab. Some owners of taxicabs operating from garages, figuring that they will not be discovered by inspectors from the taxicab bureau, stand their vehicles in front of restaurants and theatres, competing with hackmen properly licensed, whose vehicles conform with all sections of the ordinance."

"Persons coming out of these places, who wish to ride to their destination in a taxicab are usually apt to select the most convenient vehicle. The taxicabs operated from garages are similar in shape and appearance to the properly licensed taxicabs and it is therefore a simple matter for uniformed persons to make a mistake. However, there is no similarity in the rates and the users discover this fact when the time comes to settle the bill."

"How can the users of these taxicabs ride any distance and then refuse to pay for the privilege? What authority permit them to do such a thing? The answer is, the courts. The courts have ruled that in the case of a business that should be licensed and is not licensed the owners cannot collect for services performed."

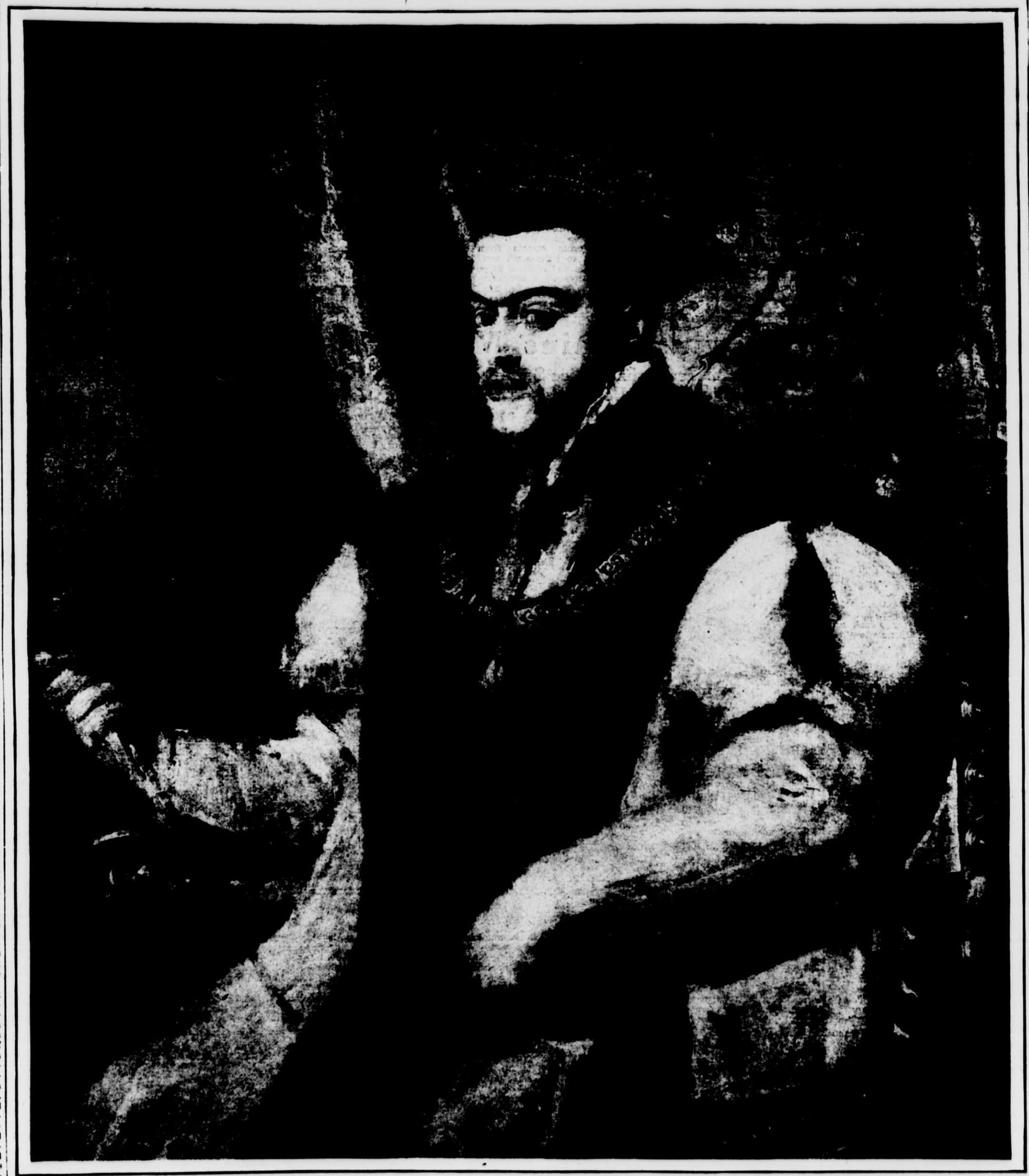
"How does this ruling apply to taxicabs operated from a garage? In this way. As soon as the owner of such taxicabs places his vehicles in front of a public place, unless the vehicles are summoned from the garage on the demand of customers, they compete with the properly licensed public hacks and thereby violate the section of the public hack ordinance which states that a public hack is a vehicle plying for hire and which solicits public patronage upon the streets."

"Under the court ruling such a vehicle is not properly licensed and the owner cannot collect for the services performed. So it can be readily understood that if a patron of one of these taxicabs refuses to pay the fare demanded he cannot be forced to pay. On the other hand, by giving the case publicity the owner is extremely liable to get himself in trouble, and he may be prosecuted by the taxicab authorities for operating a public hack without a license."

"However, it is well for a person who undertakes to ride free in this style of taxicab to have a companion who will act as witness. The reason is that the owner may contend in court that his vehicle was standing before the public place at the time of the case, that a public hack is a vehicle plying for hire and which solicits public patronage upon the streets. The chauffeur will maintain that he was not familiar with the person desiring the vehicle and consequently he was deceived in picking up the first party that sought his vehicle."

"Through this technicality the owner may be able to collect for the service unless the user can prove with the aid of his witness that the vehicle was standing in front of the public place for a longer time than was required for the run from the garage. A demand may then be made upon the owner for his time sheets, showing when the vehicle left the garage, and if the sheets have been properly kept they will prove the user's contention."

Titian's Philip II. Bought by American Woman for \$350,000



What was called the art event of 1913 took place a few weeks ago, when one of the most famous portraits in existence, Philip II. of Spain, by Titian, was purchased by Mrs. Thomas J. Emery of Cincinnati. The portrait was painted by Titian when the master was 70 years old, and is considered one of the finest produced by that famous painter. The picture is in the condition in which it left the hands of the master—some later additions by unknown artists having been removed.

rubies were put on the market, and at first were sold at the rate of about \$100 per carat. Furthermore, a great many purchasers were fooled into buying them at real ruby prices, very much in excess of the figures just mentioned. They thought they were getting bargains, but they were not, for to-day a fine ruby may bring from two thousand to five thousand dollars per carat. The reconstructed ruby looked like a real stone, but the humbug was driven so fast that to-day you can buy reconstructed rubies at 50 cents a carat. They are the cheapest of imitations and do not disturb the trade in real rubies."

"Are diamonds still doctored extensively?" "I haven't heard of a case in ten years. And in view of what happened to artificially colored diamonds and reconstructed rubies, I think it highly probable. If not, indeed, certain, that the doctoring of pearls will pass into history as a clumsy attempt at a raw swindle."

"How about the cabled statement that an old Hindu living in a suburb of Paris has altered inexpensive American pearls and afterward has seen them sold as high as \$90,000 each?" Mr. Nissen laughed.

drop of alcohol would immediately unpuzzle the experts."

"American pearls are rarely of any great value as compared with Indian pearls, because they lack the desired lustre, and for another important reason. Pearls are used to-day principally in necklaces. For these, round pearls are required, and America produces very few of them. Such pearls as America does produce are found in Tennessee, Wisconsin and other Middle Western States, north and south."

"The demand for pearls is said to have grown enormously during recent years, both in Europe and America, and the reasons for this have been debated many times. Mr. Nissen thinks that it is based on a simple trait of human nature, seen in many directions."

"Mankind usually wants that which is hardest to get," he said philosophically. "That, in my opinion, accounts for the increasing demand for pearls that really are good."

"You must remember that pearls are growing scarcer all the time, and as far as I can see the demand will continue to exceed the supply, unless a new and valuable fishery is unexpectedly discovered. And men who have been long in the trade do not look

"Since pearls have become so fashionable, however, the individual diver has been superseded by grappleling hooks, almost identical with dredging machines. They are lowered into the beds, and scrape up everything they come in contact with, bringing up all sorts of oysters, large and small; and the men engaged in the fisheries open every one of them, no matter how tiny, hoping to find therein at least a small pearl usually called seed pearls."

"Now that wholesale sort of fishing for pearls has several results. In the first place it creates a market for seed pearls, because when a hundred persons are wearing pearls a thousand or ten thousand other persons also want some to wear. This perfectly natural desire for seed pearls among persons who cannot afford larger ones undoubtedly increases the price and thereby encourages the fisheries to keep on dredging small oysters and opening every one of them. But it also has another, and perhaps a more important result. It insures a constantly increasing scarcity of large pearls."

"You know, of course, that a pearl is an excrescence, the symptom of disease in an oyster; and the longer

cannot later on pick a peach; you destroy the fruit that might develop from it."

"Although men by accident nowadays do occasionally come upon a big oyster having within its shell a largely developed pearl, yet it is almost a rarity at present to find a large, virgin pearl. Few people outside of the trade have any idea of the widespread interest that is aroused when a really fine pearl weighing 20 or 25 grains comes into the market. It is noted about and it creates almost as much of a sensation in the pearl market as the discovery of a new Rembrandt would create in the world of art."

"As to the scarcity of pearls and the relation of supply and demand, statistics show that from all the fisheries of the world combined there have been gathered during the last five years an average of ten millions of dollars worth of pearls per annum. The quantity, by the way, keeps growing less every year, but prices have consistently gone higher, so the total amount of money realized on a decreasing production remains about stationary."

"Now, taking into account the fact that New York alone sells more than ten millions of dollars in pearls every

quantities of pearls; possessed them literally by bushels."

"As soon as it was seen that this new supply was available agents were sent to the interior of India and the more alert of them in a comparatively few years purchased all the fine stones that the Oriental owners were willing to part with. A few of the princes still hold on to the collections formed by themselves and their ancestors for generations and will not dispose of them."

"At the coronation of King George, for example, I was introduced to a rajah in military dress, who had decorated himself with at least five million dollars' worth of pearls. His magnificent head dress was adorned by ropes and groups of pearls of almost incalculable value and he wore massed strands of other pearls in place of gold braid on his coat and cloak. For some reason this rajah did not seem to be especially mindful of the fact that he was carrying five million dollars' worth of pearls around with him in plain sight, for I met and talked with him in one of the large London hotels and he apparently had no guards."

"As I have said, there are a few high personages in India, like this rajah, who still possess enormous quantities